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THE OLD GUARD BALL.

HOW THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE CAN BE MADE BEAUTIFUL.

THE question of decoration is one which enters largely into the preparations for the public entertainments of the gay season in the gay city; for New York can take time to be gay without a dependence upon extraneous means of accomplishing the result. It can, apparently, afford it; and the expenditures which are made at the public balls—excepting, notably, the Charity—show that elaboration is a necessity of the success always anticipated.

Wheeling into line regularly, and after due expectation, the Old Guard Ball has deservedly assumed, and as deservedly holds prominence, which its military character and social recognition should perpetuate. It has, by force of its own importance, crowded out all of the occasional military receptions; and the antiquity of the organization, which glories in its motto, "*De Novo Juventutem Agimus*," blends so nicely with the younger element existing in the command that the Old Guard infuses its own vitality into whatever it undertakes to do.

Three years ago, when the Metropolitan Opera House was just ready for occupancy, the Old Guard gave it the preference for their ball. The departure from the associations of the Academy of Music was considered dangerous. But the experiment was successful. A second year, with an *éclat* that heightened the interest in the occasion, showed the wisdom of the choice; and the third was tangible evidence that even the Metropolitan Opera House could be made very beautiful by a proper expenditure, under competent superintendence.

The building itself has many faults of construction, and the almost unbroken monotony of the interior seems only to be disturbed when beauty and fashion, diamonds and flowers as the accessories, fill the boxes on an opera night. It is not an easy building to decorate. The sameness of color is a mute argument towards the indefinite conclusion that the least adornment is the most—a convenient judgment for the stockholders, but an unappreciated condition, so far as the general ball-going public is concerned. There is much to be covered up, and the covering up is apt to be expensive. The eye of a practical director must be more than usually far-seeing to avoid the error of barrenness in one respect, and, quite as carefully, permit no overcrowding of decorative material in another.

Then, the decoration committees of the balls are apt to be constituted with a regard to prominence, rather than usefulness. The selection of the Old Guard, however, is made with a view to efficiency as well as the ornamentation which the white coat and the bright buttons inevitably give to the old and young veterans commanded by Major McLean. Lieutenant Benjamin Gurney is as proud of his Old Guard badge as he is of his own personality and identification with art matters. The camera has been permitted to do sunlight work for him for many years; but his superintendence and devising of the decorations at the Old Guard balls are dependent upon himself rather than the sunlight.

Any attempt at decoration of so large an audi-

torium as that of the Metropolitan Opera House, especially for a military entertainment, is a temptation to hide everything that can be hidden under decoration of an essentially military character. The temptation is, necessarily, hard to withstand, even to an Old Guardsman, flushed with the success of previous occasions, and expectant of a coming one.

How well the temptation may be overcome was shown by the decorations at the ball given on Thursday evening, January 21—the grandest success which the Old Guard have ever achieved, and one which, socially, financially and decoratively, merits the prominence we give it in our current number of THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

The scene, with the dancing floor waiting for occupancy, and the lights turned up awaiting the opening of the ball, was attractive enough to command admiration from the occupants of the boxes. When literally "filled in" during the grand march of the Old Guards and their guests, and by the dancers afterward, there was enough elaboration to criticize and very much to admire.

The stage being set as a woodland, with full-cut borders, and the wings built out in a forest of pines for a background, with large specimens of rubber trees, royal palms, orange trees and palmettos in the foreground, was appropriate to the practicable scene of "Fort McLean," with its interior handsomely furnished for the reception of the gallant Major himself, with the electric lights giving the moonlight effect characteristic of the social campaigners at their best.

The florist had been called upon, without stint, for the ultra-military features. The good friends of the Old Guard had sent palmettos from South Carolina, and fair ladies from the Crescent City had thoughtfully sent orange trees. The duty of Mr. Frederick Donohue to supply, care for and arrange the floral and arborescent decorations required good taste, and generosity towards the decorators, who were, under the direction of Lieutenant Gurney and his chosen associates, Messrs. Hamel and Sheldon, to avoid clashing of intentions or interests, for the general effect. And he exercised the discretion, worked with a will, and accomplished the result desired.

Rustic vases, filled with flowering plants, cinnamoms, Chinese primroses and Cape asters, were judiciously used, all brilliant in blended colors, the exterior of the fort being festooned with garlands of smilax, and large bunches of the American Beauty, Katherine Mermet and *La France* roses. The outer edge of the dancing floor was utilized for the convenience of guests, with seats other than the ordinary chairs, and at spaces of eight to ten feet on either side of the entrance, extending the entire distance to the proscenium, were orange trees, camellias, rubber plants and palms, with over a hundred species of plants in pots and tubs.

The boxes on both the first and second row were ornamented by palm branches, drooping over the center of each compartment, with three palmetto leaves, the point of meeting of the stems at the division of the boxes being garnished with the deep crimson poinsettia leaves, held by bands of smilax.

The foyer of the Opera House was not neglected. The florist here transformed the rather uninviting corridors by a liberal use of banana trees, latanias and palmettos, the whole forming a solid mass of green, serving the double purpose of combining beauty to the eye and protection from the cold blasts of an inclement winter night, when the fair shoulders of the ladies were at a disadvantage when compared with the shielding services of the uniform of the Old Guard and their guests from other cities.

In the other decorations, the features of the material used were preserved in their military dignity without undue prominence. Stalwart effigies of helmeted and armored knights stood guard near Fort McLean, and revived memories of what we read of knightly times and the feudal era—although a suggestion to the decorator that an Old Guardsman would have been more appropriate to the scene and occasion, would not have been out of place or practice. The harmless howitzer and garland-wreathed cannon peeped out from among the greeneries over a pyramid of drums.

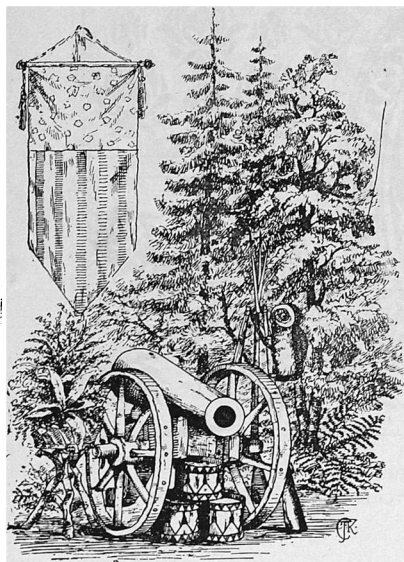
To avoid theatrical effect, and to bring into play the best means of adorning the house, without the appearance of tin-plate and horse-hair embellishment, there were occasional breast-plates and helmets, arranged in front of the boxes, on the lower tier, and the use of flags on staffs, with spear-head ends, gave the drapery character, without apparent effort. The omnipresent bearskin hats of the Old Guard were conspicuous, but not intrusive, from number or arrangement; and knapsacks—which looked as though they had seen service—were scattered throughout the house, doing duty in

front of the boxes with crossed muskets, halberds, sabers, gonfalone, armorial bearings, military insignia, and trophies and presentation flags, recalling the remembrance of the Light Guard of 1826, the City Guard of 1833, and the tiger's-head emblem—always inseparable from the associations of these commands, which are as progenitors of the Old Guard of to-day. The silken streamers and the bunting, reaching like a broken canopy of colors, from the center of the ceiling to the balcony front, relieved the eye from the glare of the circle of light from the chandelier, and holding, as in delicate hands, the scene below, with its gorgeous array of uniforms, flowers, and the female loveliness which invites description, but which passeth the understanding of an ordinary mortal, especially on the night of an Old Guard ball.

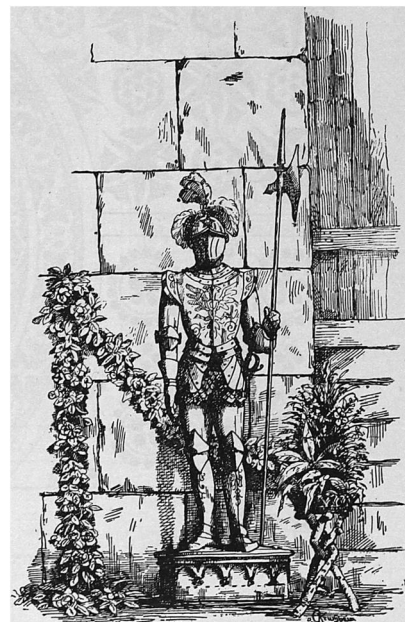
TINTS, TONES AND SHADES OF COLOR.

TINTS, tones and shades of color have been, and still are, too indiscriminately used to mean the same and different things, that no definite impression can be given, unless there exists a previous knowledge of the mode in which the words are applied. Tints are those specific qualities that apply to individuals of a class as distinguished from each other. Shades of color imply the degree of brilliancy or depth. Tones of color indicate the general aspects of tints or shades, especially designating the degree of warmth or coolness, as cool greens, warm grays. There may be lighter and darker shades of the same tone, but not of the same tint. The word tone is also used by itself in opposition to crudeness and rawness of color, and hence is technically descriptive of the tertiary compounds, of whatever tint or shade, while the primary colors and the binary compounds—blue, red and yellow, and purple, orange and green—are technically distinguished as color. The lighter shades of tone are technically included, in this sense, under the term of grays—warm, as they contain orange; cool, as they contain purple and green. Tints and tones are further classed as pure, as they approach purple; warm, as they approach orange; heavy, unless they are exceedingly transparent; muddy, as they approach green. Half-tints express those gradations of color, and half-lights those gradations of light, that exist between the greatest brilliancy and the shadows. Contrasted colors are those in opposition, balanced when no one appears predominant. Colors are said to be supported by similar tints, adjacent and echoed by them, when in different parts of the tableau or general surface decorated. Painters term an effect muddy when it is dirty in color and wanting in transparency, producing a disagreeable and harsh effect, resulting from antipathy of certain colors.

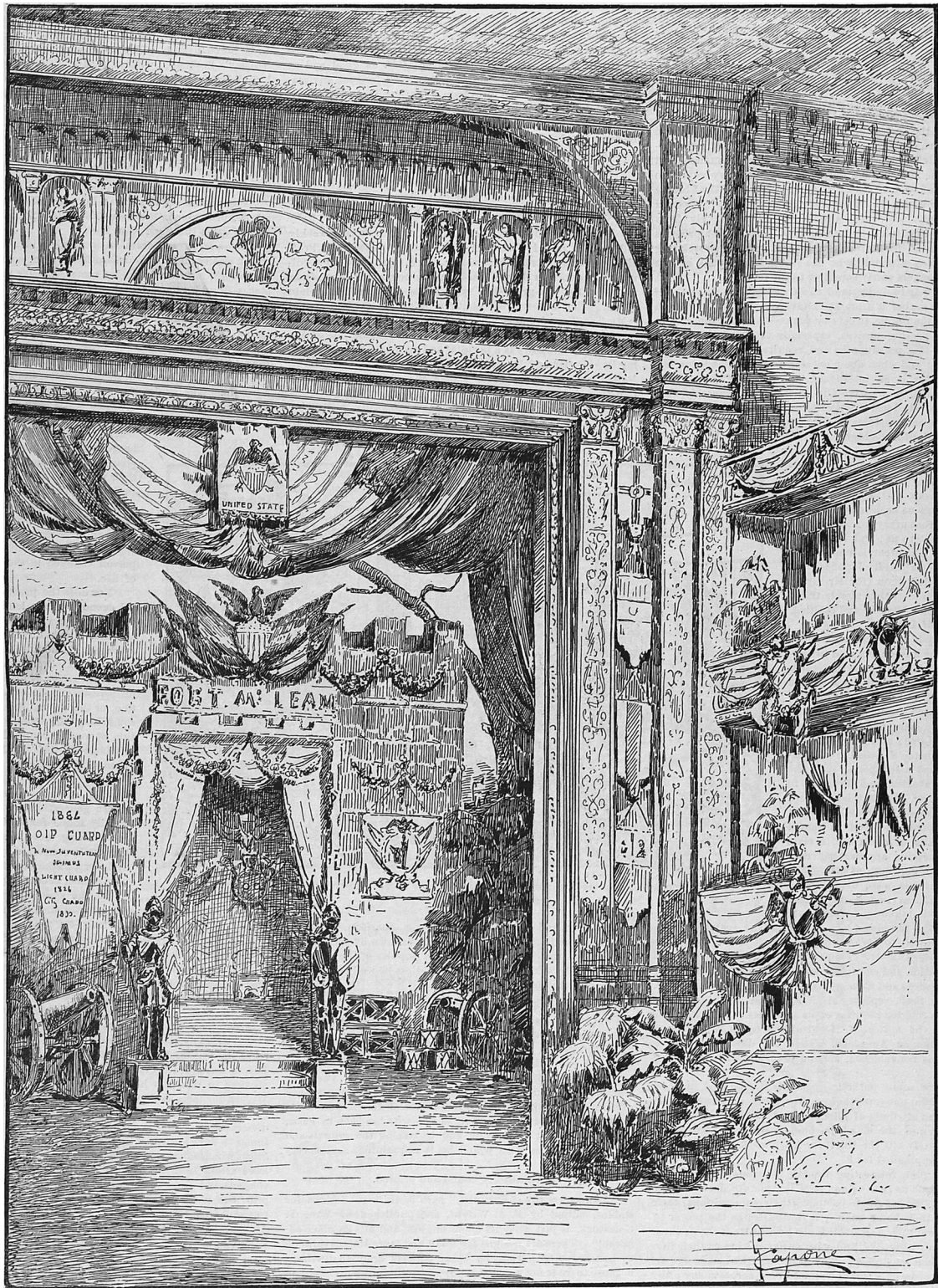
DETERMINATION OF TINTS.—In determining the tints to be used for decoration, they should be looked at before adoption as they appear at the distance and height they are to occupy in the designs, as colors are affected in hue by the position of the spectator.



CANNON AND STAND OF ARMS AT OLD GUARD BALL.



KNIGHT IN ARMOR AT OLD GUARD BALL.



DECORATIONS OF THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE, OCCASION OF OLD-GUARD BALL. SKETCHED BY G. CAPONE.